

ADVANCED INTERNET INTERFACE

REFERENCE TO PRIORITY APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent
Application No. 60/086,671 which was filed on May 26, 1998 entitled
ADVANCED INTERNET INTERFACE.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention pertains the global computing network otherwise
known as the Internet or the World Wide Web. More particularly,
the invention pertains to a system for selectively tailoring
information delivered to an Internet user depending upon the
particular needs of the user.

Description of the Prior Art

The Internet is a global computer network that is rapidly
changing the landscape of the business community and has begun
change the way people perceive themselves as citizens of the global
community. By its very nature, the Internet provides a flexible
vehicle to deliver information from any point on the globe to any
other point on the globe. Providing such a vast amount of
information on demand is a feat which is unparalleled in history in
both size and scope. However, due to the limitations inherent with
computer hardware, modems and telephonic systems, only a small
portion of the capabilities of the Internet are utilized today. As

the performance of computer hardware and software catches up with the expectations of the Internet-using community, the applications for which the Internet is used will increase tremendously.

5 Use of the Internet is in its infancy. Much to the chagrin of the Internet-using community, the press constantly features articles and commentary on the Internet which is overly simplistic and misleading. Much of the capabilities of the Internet remain more hype than fact. Since evolution of the Internet is in its rudimentary stages, no one can predict where the frontier will lead.

10 One of the current problems with the Internet is that inexperienced people in the business community and the user community tend to view the Internet as a natural extension (or slight modification) of the currently existing media. For example, much of the public uses the Internet as a high tech phone book whereby a user can obtain detailed information regarding a company's products, services or other background information regarding a company. A perusal of home pages currently existing on the World Wide Web confirms that home pages are currently a hybrid of the business-to-business Yellow Pages® directory and a television commercial. The home pages are unable to obtain any information regarding the specific Internet users which are contacting the home page nor are they able to deliver information tailored specifically to that user without the user experiencing a tedious "virtual gauntlet" of boring questions that they must answer time and time again for each home page that is accessed.

The initial enthusiasm and mystique associated with the Internet will quickly evaporate unless Internet users and the business community begin to utilize the Internet to its fullest potential.

Accordingly, there exists a serious need for delivering useful information to an Internet user that can be depended upon to deliver quality data as reliably as current utilities are delivered.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a system for delivering information from an information provider to an information user that is selectively tailored toward the capabilities of the information provider and the needs of the information user. The system includes an interactive interface which provides a medium for information users to communicate with information providers. More specifically, the system includes means for the information user to tailor the profile of the information user depending upon the needs or desires of the information user. Separate means permit the information provider to view the information user profile and to structure the information seen by the information user in a format that is most suitable to that information user.

The system also enables the information user to operatively tailor their profile on a real time basis. Thus, the information provider to tailor the information provided may the Internet using community depending upon the time of day, business conditions or other factors.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide an advanced Internet interface between Internet information users and Internet information providers.

Other objects and advantages will become apparent to those skilled in the art after reading the detailed description of a presently preferred embodiment.

INS. P1

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The preferred embodiment will be described with reference to the drawing figures wherein like numerals represent like elements throughout.

A block diagram of the interface between current information users and information providers over the Internet is shown in **Figure 1**. The information transport infrastructure **10** includes all of the infrastructure **10** required to convey information between the plurality information providers **20, 22, 24, 26** and plurality information users **12, 14, 16, 18**. This transport infrastructure **10** includes, but is not limited to, a wireless or wired public or private telephone system, a local area network (LAN) or a wide area network (WAN) upon which the information users **12, 14, 16, 18** or information providers **20, 22, 24, 26** are resident, the plurality of way stations in between, and all of the computing resources required to deliver the information. It should be recognized that this infrastructure **10** could include the local cable television (CATV) infrastructure, telephone company infrastructure or even the wires provided by the electric company over which information

information may be transmitted. It should also be recognized that the information may be transmitted by satellite or microwave means and the present example should not be viewed as a specific limitation upon the scope of the present invention.

5 As shown in **Figure 1**, as each information user **12, 14, 16, 18** utilizes the Internet to access one or more information providers **20, 22, 24, 26**, each information provider **20, 22, 24, 26**, such as a Web page, will appear identical to each information user **12, 14, 16, 18**. There is no tailoring of information to each information user **12, 14, 16, 18**. Of course, an information user **12, 14, 16, 18** can run the aforementioned "virtual gauntlet" of questions to obtain the information they require, but this process is extremely frustrating and time consuming. Additionally, much of the information requested from the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** by an information provider **20, 22, 24, 26** is standard information such as an information user's name, address and other personal or financial information.

Most Web pages are structured as a logical tree and branch format as shown in **Figure 2**. First, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** accesses the desired home page **40**. As the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** inputs information and makes selections, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** gains access to additional tiers of information. For example, if the first choice **42** is selected by information user **12, 14, 16, 18** on the home page **40**, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** will be shown a second tier of choices **50, 52, 54**. Selection of the first choice **50** from this

second tier of choices **50, 52, 54** will provide access to a third tier of information with three additional choices **56, 58, 60**. In this manner, the Web page **40** will provide incremental additional information in response to the selections made by the information user **12, 14, 16, 18**. Ultimately, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** will acquire the information they need after one or more attempts or they will give up in frustration and access a competitor's home page or make a telephone call directly to the company.

The system **9** of the present invention for providing an advanced, selectively tailored Internet interface is shown in **Figure 3**. As shown, both the information users **12, 14, 16, 18** and the information providers **20, 22, 24, 26** are selectable and changeable entities; in contrast to the static entities that presently comprise the Internet. As shown, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** may tailor their information user profile as needed to acquire specific information. In this manner, one might even view the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** as having "multiple personalities."

As shown in **Figure 4A**, for example, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** may have a business profile **200** which is specifically tailored toward the information user's **12, 14, 16, 18** business needs. The profile **200** comprises a file **202** having a plurality of fields **204** which hold data that the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** is male, Caucasian, fiscally conservative, politically conservative, is employed by a Fortune 500 company, is employed in

a sales position, has an undergraduate degree in economics, speaks English and is a U.S. resident.

Alternatively, as shown in **Figure 4B**, the information user's **12, 14, 16, 18** profile **220** for accessing the Internet for pleasure comprises a file **202** having a plurality of fields **204** which hold data that the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** is a male, Caucasian, college graduate, has a liberal arts degree, homosexual, speaks several languages, has an annual income of \$70,000-\$100,000 socially liberal and fiscally liberal. It should be noted that a data file **250** having a standard format as shown in **Figure 4C** may be adopted by all information users **12, 14, 16, 18** and information providers **20, 22, 24, 26** on the Internet. In this manner, a user may simply check or fill-in any of those user profile attributes **252A-252N** that are applicable. As shown, there are almost an unlimited number of columns which may be created to identify all of a user's attributes **252**. Additionally, a plurality of profiles **260A-260N** may be created by the user. For example, the user may create a business profile **260A** for all of his or her business trades, and then create several personal profiles **260B, 260C** for their personal traits. This profile is stored in computer memory (not shown) and transferred to an information provider **20, 22, 24, 26** when a Web page is accessed. These multiple profiles **252A-252N** are not unlike the multiple personalities that currently exist in every day life for many individuals. In accordance with the teachings of the present invention, the profiles **252A-252N** are selectively tailored to the needs of the information user **12, 14,**

16, 18 at a particular time. Although several current Web pages permit a user to create a profile for that particular Web page, the information user 12, 14, 16, 18 must create this rudimentary profile each time they access the Web page. The present invention
5 has the advantage that a detailed standard profile 252 may be created having an tremendous amount of detail and selectivity then this profile 252 may be utilized with any information provider that accepts the standard format.

Referring to **Figure 5A**, an information provider 300 in
10 accordance with the present invention is shown. The information provider 300 is a virtual panoply of information which is placed in a mosaic most pleasing to the information users 12, 14, 16, 18. The information on the Web page 302 may be thought of as a mosaic of electronic tiles A, B, C1-C16, D, E, F, G each of which have a
15 portion of the Web page 302. Each tile A-G is a result of a separate data stream 310-322 which individually updates the tiles A-G. The tiles A-G may change, and the format and location of the data streams A-G may change as a result of the change in the data streams. As shown, the tiles A-G may be changed on a yearly,
20 quarterly, daily, hourly or constant basis. Additionally, as shown, the entire Web page 302 may be changed, or only one or more portions of the Web page 302 may be changed as will be explained in detail hereinafter.

Each data stream 310-322 has a set of information identifiers
25 for identifying the type of information provided by the data stream 310-322. For example, the data stream 310 which supplies section

A may carry general information regarding the Web page's owner such as a corporation. The file structure of the information identifiers **340A-340N** is shown in **Figure 5B**. Among the plurality of other data streams **312-324** may exist intellectual property information such as a company's copyright and trademark notifications (section G) **318**; directions on how to reach the corporation's headquarters (section F) **320**, sales or service locations (section E) **322**; and a plurality of other information related to a company's products or services (sections B, C, D and H) **323, 314, 324, 312**. It should be apparent even to those with rudimentary skills in the art that the foregoing discussion regarding the data streams **310-324** involving a company's products or services may apply equally to any of the other data streams that are set forth on a Web page **300**.

The tailoring of a company's information or services will now be explained in detail hereinafter. The three data streams that will be selected are a company's logo (section H) **312**, a company's product line (section D) **324** and the description of the product line (section B) **323**. Although some of the data streams may be individually linked, such as a product and the description of the product and the price of the product; they will be treated separately for simplification of the explanation.

Tailoring of the data stream **312** of the company's logo will now be described. As shown in **Figure 6**, this or any other data stream **310-324** may be tailored toward the time of day. This will give the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** the pleasing experience

that the Web page **302** is "fresh." For example as shown in **Figure 6A**, the logo **H** may be profiled by a rising sun during the early morning hours, a bright sun during the day and a setting sun in the late afternoon and early evening hours. The moon and stars may come out after nightfall, as shown in **Figure 6B**, and would be an indication of the actual time of day. Although this may appear as a gimmick, the information user **12, 14, 16, 18** may access the Web page **302** all day long without actually seeing the same Web page **302** twice. It should be recognized that other portions of the Web page **302** may be likewise tailored. This could also be a powerful marketing concept whereby the logo might change color for a certain period of time indicating that the company's products are on sale, the stock is doing well or that the company is hiring. Any aspect of the logo **H** may be changed to provide useful information to the information user **12, 14, 16, 18**. Additionally depending upon the profile **252** of the information the users **12, 14, 16, 18**, a Japanese resident accessing a Web page may view a "sun rising" page, while simultaneously a U.S. resident will see the moon, stars and nightcap. The profile **252** will be downloaded to the information provider **20, 22, 24, 26**.

Referring back to **Figure 5A**, the data stream **323** concerning a company's products **B** will now be described in detail hereinafter. This data stream **323** is shown in greater detail in **Figure 7**. As shown, the data stream **323** may comprise a plurality of separate data streams **323A-323C** which change on a basis set by the information provider **20, 22, 24, 26**. The first data stream **323A**,

for example, pertains to a company's "high end" line of products **380**, the second data stream **323B** may comprise a company's "middle end" line of products **382**, and the third data stream **323C** may comprise the company's "low end" line of products **384**.

5 Each particular data stream **323A-323C** may comprise the same products throughout the day as shown in **Figure 7**, or may change periodically throughout the day, or based upon the time of day. For example, the high end line of products **380** may relate to gourmet coffee; the middle end line of products may relate to your average "cup of joe" **382**; and the third data stream **323C** may relate to your "get it hot" coffee line for people who are looking only for a caffeine intake and are willing to "choke down" any sludge **384**. These three lines of products **380-384** may be displayed until approximately 11:00 a.m. Thereafter, three new high, middle and low end lines of products **380-384** are described such as a company's soda or tea beverage line. In the evening, the three data streams **323A-323C** may again change to liquors used for after dinner drinks.

Referring to the high end product description data stream **323A**, this data stream **323A** may be selectively tailored in a different manner as will be described in detail hereinafter. For example, the data stream **323A** may actually comprise three separate lines of data **323A1**, **323A2**, **323A3**, one tailored towards very conservative, serious or older individuals **323A1**, one tailored towards "no frills" type people who seek only raw data regarding a product, such as health conscious individuals **323A2**; and a third data stream that is playful, light and funny for the common

Internet surfer **323A3**. Accordingly, going along with the present example the high end line of coffee products may be described in the conservative data stream as "a succulent blend of Columbian and Arabica beans which are blended for an exquisite taste and are dry
5 roasted to relieve the coffee of any bitterness." This type of explanation is specifically tailored to "high income and high end serious and conservative individuals who are looking for a premium product." The description of the high end product for the "data seeking" type of individual may read as follows "a blend of 60%
10 Arabica, 40% Columbian coffee beans is blended and freeze dried at minus 60 degrees Celsius. A six ounce cup contains 100 calories, zero grams of fat..." For those generation X'ers who are accustomed to a "loud" advertising style, the following will suffice: "Yo! This cup of joe will be blow you away. Be the first
15 of your friends to drink this liquid gold and have the bragging rights that you, truly, have it together." As can be seen by these differing descriptions, a conservative individual would clearly be turned off by the in-your-face manner of the third data stream. Likewise, younger individuals would most likely be bored by the
20 first description. In this manner, a company can cater to all needs without having to boil down and sanitize a particular Web page to meet a majority market, while alienating minorities.

The most beneficial aspect of the present invention which permits a company to tailor the delivery of information to a
25 specific user without requiring the user to input alot of mundane and unnecessary information will now be described in detail. When

an individual accesses a particular Web page, the individual's current profile that the individual has selected, (for example **252A**), is automatically downloaded to that Web page. The Web page manager matches the user's profile to the information identifier's **340A-340N**. Depending upon the number of matches, the manager selects the data stream that corresponds most closely with the profile **252A**. In this manner, the Web page manager tailors the Web page to the specific individual based on the profile. The Web page manager selects most appropriate data streams for the current information user **12, 14, 16, 18** depending upon the currently available data streams and the profile of the individual. Although there may be a standard Internet protocol developed which may require an information user **12, 14, 16, 18** to input their profile in a standard format such as 100 different sorting aspects, this is not required. The Web page manager will use those downloaded portions and will tailor the Web page accordingly.

This system allows the information provider to selectively provide information to the information user without the information user's knowledge or without irking the information user by telling them they need a password, or they need to be a member. It permits those members to get to the information seamlessly. For example, low end users may receive coupons, high end users may receive product warranty information.

Another feature of the present invention is that it includes the ability to access a web site and map the entire web site. For example, as shown in **Figur 2**, when an information user selects

choice 1 Ai, the person does not know what exists in choice 1 Ci
until they get there. Often, the person forgets the other choices
available. The present invention may either map the route which
the person has gone and provide a tree and branch diagram as a
5 picture-in-picture window within the screen or may map the entire
web site upon accessing the Web page. For example, when a person
access a web site, the web site navigator resident within the
information user's browser may quickly go in and access every page
of the web site. It will then summarize, and categorize the
10 information in a concise manner and provide a branch and tree type
map.

Although the invention has been described in part by making
detailed reference to certain specific embodiments, such details is
intended to be instructive rather than restrictive. It will be
15 appreciated by those skilled in the art that many variations may be
made in the structure and mode of operation without departing from
the spirit and scope of the invention as disclosed in the teachings
herein.

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